

III. The Claims Define Allowable Subject Matter

The Office Action rejects 1) claims 3, 4, 8-10, 13, 14, 18, 22 and 25 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Nakamura et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0145338); and 2) claims 3, 4, 8-10, 13, 14, 18, 22 and 25 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Nakamura et al. in view of Ochicai (U.S. Patent No. 5,994,789). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

With regard to the rejections under §103(a) over Nakamura, Applicant respectfully submits that: 1) Nakamura qualifies as prior art under 35 U.S.C. §102(e); and 2) the subject matter of Nakamura and that of the present claims was commonly owned at the time of invention of the subject matter presently claimed. Accordingly, Nakamura is disqualified as a reference for use under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) by virtue of 35 U.S.C. §103(c). Withdrawal of the rejections under §103(a) over Nakamura is respectfully requested.

With regard to the rejection under §102(e) over Nakamura, Nakamura does not teach all of the claimed combination of features of claims 3, 18 and 22. Nakamura does not disclose "a capacitor provided between said voltage converter and said first drive circuit," as recited in independent claims 3 and 18. Further, Nakamura does not disclose "said first drive circuit starts an electric power conversion for driving said first motor in powering module after said voltage step-up operation is completed" as recited in claim 3 (emphasis added); "said voltage converter starts a voltage step-down operation... after said first drive circuit drives said first motor," as recited in claim 18 (emphasis added); and "after said first drive circuit starts to drive said first motor in regenerative mode, said voltage converter starts a voltage step-down operation," as recited in claim 22 (emphasis added).

The Office Action asserts that Nakamura discloses in Figure 1 that inverter 14 receives electric power from capacitor 13 after completion of the voltage step-up operation by DC/DC converter 12. The Office Action states that voltage V_m detected by voltage sensor 20

of Figure 1 of Nakamura is "full charged signal V_m" indicating that charging of capacitor 13 is completed. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

The Office Action further asserts that because capacitor 13 of Nakamura "smoothes" DC voltage, supplies power to inverter 14, then it is implied that the capacitor is fully charged before the first drive circuit starts and thus, Nakamura teaches all of the currently claimed combination of features.

Applicant respectfully disagrees. As discussed during the personal interview, Voltage sensor 20 of Nakamura is merely means for detecting the end-to-end voltage of capacitor 13, namely the output voltage of DC/DC converter 12 (paragraph [0077]) and voltage sensor 20 is not configured to output a signal indicating that charging of capacitor 13 is completed as described above. Applicant respectfully directs attention to Figure 3 and the configuration beyond therein of Nakamura, wherein the voltage step-up operation by DC/DC converter 12 is controlled through feedback of output voltage V_m from voltage sensor 20.

Applicant further asserts that with reference to Figure 3 of Nakamura, it can be clearly seen that output voltage V_m from voltage sensor 20 is also used for controlling the electric power conversion by inverter 14. In other words, Nakamura clearly discloses in Figure 3 that, based on output voltage V_m from voltage sensor 20, the control of the voltage-step-up operation by DC/DC converter 12 and the control of the electric power conversion by inverter 14 are performed in parallel. This is a wholly different arrangement than that claimed where in the electric power conversion by an inverter is not performed until the voltage step-up operation is completed, as claimed.

Moreover, with regard to Expression 1 in paragraph [0097] of Nakamura, as discussed during the personal interview, this expression shows that the electric power supplied from capacitor 13 to inverter 14 is restricted according to the electric power stored in capacitor 13, and thus does not teach the feature that inverter 14 receives electric power from capacitor 13

after completion of the voltage step-up operation by DC/DC converter 12. In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that it is apparent that Nakamura fails to disclose that the electric power conversion by inverter 14 started after the voltage step-up operation by DC/DC converter 12 as completed.

Therefore, Applicant submits that Nakamura fails to teach "said first drive circuit starts an electric power conversion for driving said first motor in powering module after said voltage step-up operation is completed" as recited in claim 3 (emphasis); "said voltage converter starts a voltage step-down operation... after said first drive circuit drives said first motor," as recited in claim 18; and "after said first drive circuit starts to drive said first motor in regenerative mode, said voltage converter starts a voltage step-down operation," as recited in claim 22 (emphasis added).

Thus, for at least these reasons, independent claims 3, 18 and 22 are patentable over Nakamura. Further, claims 4, 8-10, 13, 14 and 25, which variously depend from the independent claims, are also patentable over Nakamura, for at least the reasons discussed above, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections under § 102(e) over Nakamura is respectfully requested.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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